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Hugarian railways and
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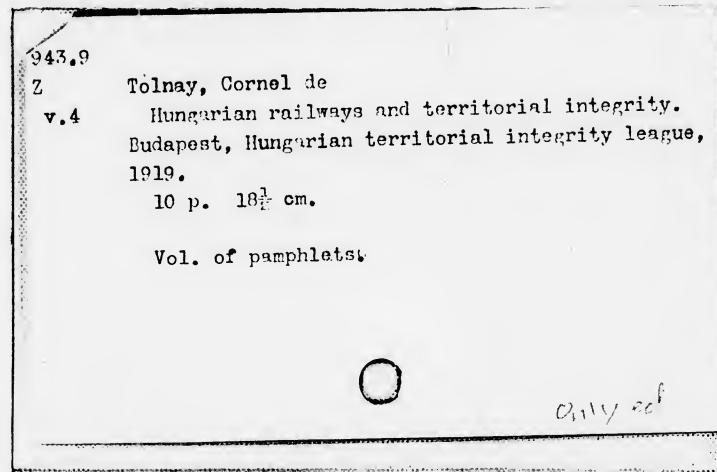
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No. 3

HUNGARIAN RAILWAYS
AND
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY

BY

CORNEL de TOLNAY

HUNGARIAN TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY LEAGUE.
BUDAPEST, 1919.

HUNGARIAN RAILWAYS AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY.

As will be seen from the following facts the construction of the Hungarian railwaynet, points incontestably in favour of the conservation of the territorial integrity of the country.

The Hungarian railwaynet, like those of France and England, has for its point of departure the capital of the country, the lines spreading out in the form of radii towards the frontiers. Budapest, the capital plays the principal rôle in the exploitation of the interior.

On the other hand, the Hungarian railways have had to face a great and important transit traffic, from east to west or from north-east to the Adriatic ports and vice versa: this, above all in the interest of the highly developed western industries, for which purpose, many facilities in tariff and freights have been added to the generally favourable construction of the lines.

For the same purpose and at great expense the Roumanian lines and those of Zimony were constructed, the «quadruple convention» in favour of facilities of transport was accepted, and numerous dispositions were afterwards made which rendered

the creation of the line Paris—Constantinople possible and a railway connection between the South of Russia and Italy passing through Fiume. The results would have been far more eminent if our Austrian neighbours had shown themselves more approachable on the subject of their own lines of connection.

The policy of the Hungarian government has always been in complete harmony with the interests of the public communications of the different nationalities of the country. Expensive and unrenumerative main lines have been constructed in regions inhabited by non-Magyar nationalities; and lines laid down by private societies have always been efficaciously subsidized by the government.

It may safely be affirmed that districts inhabited by the various nationalities have always been abundantly provided with lines of communication, often at a price of considerable sacrifice and expense to the State, and never have the Magyar districts been favoured to the detriment of the other nationalities. Slovaks, Roumans, Serbs, and whatever other nationalities may be found in the country were always placed in the way of the progress of civilization and economical development and this essentially with Magyar capital.

The total length of the railway lines in Hungary are roughly, 22,200 Km., concerning which a few details will be found in the following table:

Character railway line	Total Km.	Extention of lines in districts inhabited by non-Magyar nationalities	
		Km.	%
State railways	8,665	4,116	48
Private Ry. Cos.	1,319	644	49
Private Cos. exploited by the state	9,987	5,472	55
Local lines controlled by other companies	711	488	69
Local lines under own management	1,478	688	47
Total	22,160	11,408	51.4

From the above table it can be seen that more than half of the lines traverse regions inhabited by non-Magyar nationalities and some even more convincing facts are eminent if we consider the amount of money spent on Hungarian railways.

The total amount of capital invested is over 5,234,360,000 Kronen. The greater part of this amount, i. e., 73.4% (3,841,670,000 Kronen), was provided by the state. The participation of the state is as follows:

State lines	K	3,361,820,000
Lines lawfully independent but effectively		
State lines	K	293,850,000
Subsidies for the construction of local railways	K	186,000,000.

If we reckon out the 51.4% shown in the above table, we shall find that those regions peopled by the non-Magyar nationalities have absorbed 2,690,460,000 Kronen of the total sum invested in the railwaynet and that 1,974,620,000 Kronen of this amount have been advanced by the State (v. 73.4%).

But as it is a well-known fact that the revenues of these lines were for too small to cover the expenses of interests, amortisation and maintenance, it will be easy to calculate what enormous sums the Hungarian State was obliged to vote annually for the requirements of locomotion in the countries inhabited by the nationalities. These sums amounted to 40 millions before the war and in the future they will surely never be inferior to double that amount.

From the commencement of their construction right up to the beginning of the great war the policy of the Hungarian railways has always had the approval of the civilized West.

The first country among the great foreign powers to consider Hungarian railway policy reliable was France. It was a which French financial group founded the Austro-Hungarian Railway Company and constructed the line Vienna Pressburg Budapest Porte de Ter, which line starting on German territory ended in Roumania, and attained a total distance of 1315 Km., 729 Km. of which passed through country inhabited by the Hungarians. French capital also constructed the Süd bahn with 702 Km. of lines on Hungarian

territory. Some Belgian capitalists and engineers constructed the line from Kassa to Oderberg, of which only 62 Km. are in Austria whereas 362 Km. traverse northern Hungary. Later on an Austrian bank was charged with the affairs of this company but always with the aid of French capital. Numerous local lines in Hungary have been exploited by the Belgians. Encouraged by the fair and impartial policy of Hungary towards the nationalities and by the way in which the central administration assured the railways of all parts of the country without distinction of favourable opportunities from a commercial and technical point of view, English, Dutch, German and Swiss capital began to come into the country.

The Hungarian railways particularly desired to favour lines running to the frontiers with special rates and so promote traffic with the regions of the nationalities and with foreign countries. They were the first to introduce the system of zone fares, which enable people living at the remotest corners of the country to make long journeys at a price within their means, and before all favors the nationalities and international travellers.

Contrary to the example set by foreign railways, the Hungarian lines retained their reduced rates for goods traffic during the Great War, thereby specially favouring the foreigner and the non-Magyar nationalities of the country who have to take into consideration the great distances to be traversed when it is a question of exporta-

tion or of traffic over Fiume or of importation against the competition of German ports. (Importation of cotton from Egypt, of fruits etc.)

Here it has been shown what Hungarian railway policy has done under the benevolent eyes of foreign powers: never failing to fulfil the necessary requirements of the various nationalities and of foreign countries, and never shrinking from the most considerable sacrifices.

With regards to traffic and rates the policy of the Hungarian railways has always been uniform for all parts of the country.

If the territorial integrity of Hungary is sacrificed, besides other fearful effects it will have on the country, it will also irreparably destroy those interests of the non-Magyar nationalities and of foreign countries which Hungary has always been careful to safeguard. It is indisputable that the regions inhabited by the nationalities will suffer not a little by political changes. Great and unknown risks menace any change in the deeply rooted and closely bound up connection of the country and its provinces. It is not possible to give a new course to the evolution built up during the past fifty years, except artificially or by brute force and without being able to prove in any way whatever that the new situation will be better than the old. Under the perilous conditions brought about by the great war such experiments must not be risked.

But let us consider for a moment some other

positive disorders and general inconveniences which would result from a partition of Hungary.

If the country were dismembered than the transport of foods would suffer to a considerable extent: many different administrations would delay the traffic, the transfer of food-stuffs, live stock and other goods, at the new and many frontier stations, would aggravate the situation and be detrimental to the public welfare.

But the situation would become most menacing with regard to the rates of transport. As has already been mentioned the tariffs of the Hungarian State-railways are based on the zone-system, that is, they decrease as the distance increases. If Hungary were dismembered, the railway net would become less extended and the system of decreasing rates could not be applied since they would be neither of economical interest nor of financial advantage. There would not be any more long distances, as the present lines would be divided between two or more states which would charge the same goods two or three times the cost of administration in place of the uniform tariff of today.

Let us take some numerical examples for better explanation of the possibilities of the future. For simplifying the task we must suppose that the neighbouring states adopt the same units of tariff.

For instance: a railway wagon leaves a station in a foreign country and traverses the Hungarian railway lines to reach another station situated in a country on the other side of Hungary.

The entire distance to be covered is 700 Km, of which 100 Km and 150 Km are in separate countries and 450 Km on Hungarian lines. The present cost of transport would be 578 Kronen: but in case of a new political configuration, the cost would be 787 Kronen, i. e. an augmentation of 209 Kronen. Suppose now four countries with 100, 50, 450, and 100 Km to be crossed respectively. The difference would be still greater, 816 Kronen as against 578 Kronen: that is to say, a surplus of 238 Kronen. This difference would of course be still greater if the Hungarian railways were to do away with the use of decreasing units of tariff.

Such and other disadvantages will have far-reaching effects and these effects will be felt before all in the economic life of the Western countries, it is also absolutely certain that by no conventions or stipulations whatsoever will it be possible to remedy the damage caused, since none of the different railways, for many years to come, will be in a condition to make notable sacrifices in the interests of the facilities of transportation.

Thus it can be seen that not only Hungary will suffer by an encroachment on the territorial integrity of the country but that it will have considerable and irreparable effects on the economical life of the non-Magyar nationalities and also of foreign countries.

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Franklin Society Press., Budapest.

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